

# KIDS NOW Evaluation Executive Summary





## Executive Summary

The KIDS NOW Initiative was designed to establish and to coordinate supports and services needed to ensure that “all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their community” (Governor’s Early Childhood Task Force, 1999, p.2).

The 2002-2003 evaluation of the KIDS NOW Initiative demonstrates the rapid implementation of components throughout the state. Additionally, data from this evaluation year reveals the second statewide picture of center-based child care program quality in the state of Kentucky. The Universities of Kentucky and Louisville collaborated to evaluate programs using an integration of data (surveys, face-to-face interviews, and classroom observations) that indicated *five* key findings:

***1. Center-based child care programs in Kentucky are improving in quality. Improvement is still needed.***

Although only 36.3% of all child care teachers have a 4 year degree, child care ratings have increased in the past year. The quality of infant-toddler care remains lower than preschool care. Ratios of licensing inspectors and quality raters are still twice the recommended goal (of 1 for every 50 centers) for many of the counties in the Initiative. Centers serving high number of children on subsidy tend to be of lower quality. Likewise, infant and toddler centers who have children with disabilities were found to be of lower quality. However, preschool centers with children with disabilities had higher quality scores. These results lend support to the appropriation of funds for the Initiative.

***2. Knowledge and participation in KIDS NOW Initiative are related to overall center quality.***

Preschool centers that were more familiar with STARS for KIDS NOW and had more educated teachers tended to have higher quality classrooms, as rated by standardized instruments and observations. However, Infant Toddler classrooms that were more familiar and participated in more components of the Initiative received higher ratings.



### ***3. Enhanced efforts to promote the KIDS NOW Initiative has increased familiarity of it.***

Familiarity with KIDS NOW significantly increased with centers participating in significantly more initiatives this year compared to last year. Perceived benefits among participating centers has increased for each of the program components (Healthy Start, STARS for KIDS NOW, Scholarship program, participation in Community Early Childhood Councils).

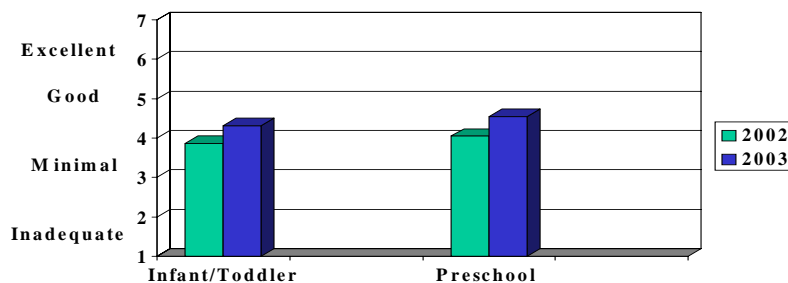
### ***4. Leadership impacts participation in and perceived benefits of the Initiative.***

There was a positive correlation between participation in STARS for KIDS NOW and directors' perceived benefit of the program. Participating programs described the Community Early Childhood councils as beneficial.

### ***5. Urban and rural differences exist in the way child care providers participate in and perceive the benefits of the components of the KIDS NOW Initiative.***

While urban centers were more likely to utilize the KIDS NOW Scholarship Program, rural centers were more likely to participate in STARS for KIDS NOW and to serve on the Community Councils. Rural staff rated KIDS NOW components more favorably than urban staff on several dimensions (Scholarship, STARS for KIDS NOW, Healthy Start, Subsidy, Licensing). Urban parents were more likely to report that needed care was unavailable and more expensive.

Quality of Care- Average Ratings on Environmental Scales for Child Care Programs in Kentucky



Average Ratings

Information on child care quality was collected in over 111 early education programs in Kentucky using the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS). These instruments are designed to assess the global classroom environment including space and furnishings, personal care routines, encouragement of language-reasoning skills, activities offered, interactions, program structure, and provisions for parents and staff. Classrooms receive a total quality rating based on a seven point scale ranging from inadequate (1) to excellent (7).

## Evaluation Team Recommendations

1. *Continue efforts to increase the numbers of licensing professionals to ensure a 1:50 ratio.*
2. *Continue to support centers participation in the early care and education components of the KIDS NOW Initiative.*
3. *Ensure targeted training and technical assistance to programs serving high numbers of children on subsidy and infant/ toddler programs serving children with disabilities.*
4. *Provide training on working effectively with families faced by poverty, discrimination and other stressors.*

